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## **Research into employee trust:**

### **Epistemological foundations and paradigmatic boundaries**

Sabina Siebert, Graeme Martin and Branko Bozic

#### ***Abstract***

*This paper explores the epistemological roots and paradigmatic boundaries of research into employee trust, a growing field in human resource management. Drawing on Burrell and Morgan's well-known sociological paradigms and their epistemological foundations, we identify the dominant approaches to employee trust research to examine its strengths and limitations. Our review of the literature on employee trust revealed that the majority of the most cited papers were written from a psychological perspective, characterized by positivistic methodologies, variance theory explanations and quantitative data collection methods. We also found that most of the studies can be located in the functionalist paradigm, and while accepting that functionalism and psychological positivism have their merits, we argue that research in these traditions sometimes constrains our understanding of employee trust in their organizations. We conclude that trust researchers would benefit from a better understanding of the ontological, epistemological and axiological assumptions underlying of HRM research and should embrace greater epistemic reflexivity.*

**Keywords:** industrial sociology, employee trust, intra-organizational trust, reflexivity, sociological paradigms<sup>1</sup>

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In this journal, John Godard (2014) argued that HRM and employment relations research had become colonized by industrial and organizational (I-O) psychology. According to Godard, this “psychologisation” of HRM, could be explained by three of factors. First, following a decline in union membership and strike activity since the 1990s, the study of industrial/labour relations and trade unions had become marginalized. Second, HRM was dominated by psychological theory, increasingly focusing on organizational behavior (OB) topics such as motivation, leadership, change, and group dynamics, but decreasingly on ‘messy’ issues requiring knowledge of economics, labour law, industrial relations or finance. Other researchers have also noted this trend: for example, Barry and Wilkinson (2015) criticized the OB-dominated approach to employee voice research because it is largely divorced from its institutional context and heavily laden with value-free assumptions. Thirdly, HRM and employment relations research have become increasingly subjugated – ontologically and methodologically – to a pure science paradigm. Accordingly, Godard summed up the dysfunctional nature of these trends by claiming the ‘psychologisation’ of HRM was ineffective, produced a negative impact on practice, and sooner or later was destined to burn itself out.

With these criticisms in mind we set out to explore Godard’s (2014) thesis of the ‘psychologisation’ of HRM and employment relations research by focusing on employee trust in organizations, a prominent theme in current HR research and practitioner interest. To do so, we have drawn on Burrell and Morgan’s (1979) well-known framework of different paradigms in social science research to: (1) identify the epistemological roots and paradigm boundaries of employee trust research and, (2) to throw new light on employee trust research, by extending our earlier critique (Siebert,

et al. 2015), and offering some specific recommendations for future HRM research in this field.

Our contributions to the HRM literature on employee trust are three-fold. Firstly, we found evidence of employee trust research adopting a psychological perspective, drawing on positivistic epistemologies, using variance theory frameworks (Langley et al, 2013), and employing experiments and surveys as methods of collecting data. Secondly, we found that Burrell and Morgan's classical analysis of 'paradigms' in organizational research helped surface the functionalist underpinnings of most employee trust research in our analysis. We contend that this dominant functionalist perspective, heavily influenced by American industrial and organizational (IO) psychology, and OB research, precludes deeper questioning of the relevance of employee trust in light of critiques of 'soft' HR as a 'failed project' (Thompson, 2011). While recognizing that positivist epistemology and functionalism have an important place in HRM research (Pfeffer, 1993), we echo Isaeva et al.'s (2015) call for trust researchers to engage in greater reflexivity. We argue that trust researchers would benefit from identifying the ontological, epistemological and axiological foundations of their research with a view to asking different questions and employing different approaches to studying employee trust. Thus, our contribution lies not only in critique but also in offering alternative ways of conceptualizing employee trust that step outside of the realm of functionalism. These alternatives are important because they shed light on different interpretations of organizational trust by stakeholders other than managers and offer a more complex reading of the theory and practice in this increasingly important field.

We engage in this discussion of paradigm boundaries in employee trust research in full knowledge of the various critiques of paradigm thinking in management research (Shepherd and Challenger, 2012) and Burrell and Morgan's version in particular (Hassard et al., 2013). However, we agree with Goles and Hirschheim (1999) who argued that Burrell and Morgan's work has played an important role in teasing out the scientism currently dominating management research, especially in elite American management business schools and elite journals (Khurana, 2007). Accordingly, we use their classification as a 'sorting device' to examine the epistemological roots and paradigm boundaries of employee trust research with a view to pointing out its limitations.

### **Employee trust**

Research into trust spans all social sciences (Kramer and Lewicki, 2010), mirrored by a wider public interest in trust discourse. Bauman (2010: 30) commented on this phenomenon with the following words: *'That it is by trust that the economic, political and social orders stand, and that it is by its absence that they fail has now become the doxa of political science.'* So, in such a context, it is not surprising that organizational trust has become an important part of the research agenda in human resource management and employment relations (Appelbaum et al., 2013; Dietz, et al, 2008; Hartog, 2006; Mayer, et al, 1995; Timming, 2009; Tzafrir, 2005). Researchers have investigated various aspects of employee trust in organizations (Fulmer and Gelfand, 2012; Kramer and Lewicki, 2010; Kramer, 1999; Lewicki, et al., 2006) identifying various sub-themes (Lyon, et al. 2015)

Researchers use different definitions of trust, however, three definitions stand out for us because they integrate different social science perspectives on trust and are highly influential. The first is by Mayer, et al. (1995: 712), who defined trust as ‘the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party.’ The second is by Rousseau, et al. (1998: 395), who developed a multidisciplinary conceptualization of trust as ‘a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another’. The third is by Lewicki and Bunker (1995: 137), who used the term ‘institutional trust’ to refer to a phenomenon that ‘develops when individuals must generalize their personal trust to large organizations made up of individuals with whom they have low familiarity, low interdependence and low continuity of interaction’. Guided by these definitions, we focused on *employees as trustors*, and their *employing organization as a trustee*. Employee trust in their *organizations*, which spans all levels of analysis, embraces the notions of vulnerability and actions, and encompasses trust between employees, employees’ trust in senior management, employees’ trust in their supervisors/leaders, and employees’ trust in the organization as a whole.

### **Epistemological assumptions and paradigms**

Conventionally, epistemology ‘is concerned with a philosophical grounding for deciding what kinds of knowledge are possible and how we can ensure that they are both adequate and legitimate (Maynard, 1994:10). A paradigm is a broader concept, best understood as ‘the philosophical stance informing the methodology and thus providing a context for the process and grounding its logic and criteria’ (Crotty, 1998: 3). Thus,

paradigms not only encompass different epistemological traditions, but also ontological and axiological assumptions (Lincoln et al., 2011; Tsoukas and Knudsen, 2005). The most discussed paradigms in the research methods literature are: positivism, post-positivism, interpretivism and critical theory (Blaikie, 2007; Creswell, 2013; Crotty, 1998; Lincoln et al., 2011), which were extended by Isaeva et al. (2015) in their study on trust researchers' epistemologies to include positivism, critical realism, pragmatism, post-modernism/post structuralism, and interpretivism.

Broadly in line with Crotty's (1998) delineation of paradigms, Burrell and Morgan's (1979) approach was to define them by asking questions concerning: (1) assumptions about the nature of social science (horizontal axis) and (2) assumptions about the nature of society (vertical axis). Burrell and Morgan (1979) argued that social sciences are rooted in different assumptions about ontology, epistemology, human nature and methodology, and these constituted the objective-subjective dimension of their framework. Approaches viewing science as realistic, positivistic, deterministic and nomothetic could be depicted as 'objective'. However, approaches that were nominalist, anti-positivistic, voluntaristic and ideographic could be seen as 'subjective'.

Burrell and Morgan's second dimension was based on a view of the nature of society in terms of two opposing tendencies - regulation or radical change. Regulation theorists, they argued, were concerned with status quo, social order, consensus, social integration and cohesion, solidarity, needs satisfaction and actuality, while radical change theorists were concerned with transformation, structural conflict, and contradiction, modes of domination, deprivation, emancipation and potentiality. Accordingly, when these two dimensions of objectivism-subjectivism and regulation-radical change were related

orthogonally, four incommensurable sociological paradigms could be described. Thus we used Burrell and Morgan (1979) sociological paradigms because they provided a framework enabling us to study the epistemological assumptions of employees' trust and to analyse the paradigmatic roots of this literature simultaneously.

*Insert Table 1 about here*

## **Methodology**

To address our research aims, we undertook an extensive review of journal articles dealing with employees' trust in their organization, specifically analysing studies on employees' trust in their supervisors, employees trust in senior management, employees trust in the organizational systems and procedures. We used a key word search for papers on 'organizational trust', 'trust AND/OR employees', and 'trust AND/OR workers' in the Web of Knowledge database. No time boundaries were set, so we captured all conceptual and empirical studies appearing before January 2015.

From the list of articles produced by our search we selected the 100 most cited papers based on the Web of Science. After verifying the relevance of these 100 publications, we read them in full, ensuing that each paper was assessed by at least two members of the research team. Following this reading, we discarded 26 works because they failed to match our selection criteria, either because they did not relate to trust in work organizations (e.g. Dirks's study of basketball teams, 2000), or because they focused on trust in co-workers/team members and not on the organization. All relevant articles were analysed to determine the main focus of the study, their underpinning methodology, and the paradigm which best described their characteristics (Burrell and



Morgan, 1979). In allocating the studies to sociological paradigms, we used the original Burrell and Morgan's criteria set out in Table 1.

We have treated sociological paradigms as 'a classificatory scheme rather than a revelation of the deep structure of social theory' and approached the analysis of employee trust studies by adopting Burrell and Morgan's framework as 'a sorting device', using their criteria. However, in contrast to Isaeva, et al. (2015) we did not ask the authors to interpret their epistemological underpinnings of their work, because our working assumption, in line with Burrell and Morgan, is that many authors are locked into particular meta-theoretical allegiances from which it is difficult to become detached. Instead we evaluated their published works according to the criteria established by Burrell and Morgan.

We recognise that using a citation count as a criterion of selection of papers can disadvantage more recent papers; and that the number of citations is not always indicative of how influential is a given article in the field of trust research. Moreover, since the Web of Science search does not include, books and book chapter, some extremely influential studies on organizational trust have been omitted (e.g. Kramer 1996).

## **FINDINGS**

### **Epistemology of research into employee trust**

More than half of the foundational studies we reviewed were epistemologically positivistic, adopting the language of variance theory (Langley, 1999; Van de Ven, 2007), which involves identification and causal explanations of antecedents and outcomes of trust. Typically, such studies made only one-way connections, with organizational

actions taken by 'trustee' senior managers as the independent variable effecting aggregate levels of 'trustor' perceptions as the dependent variable (e.g. Dirks and Ferrin, 2002; Podsakoff, et al, 1996).

The large majority of the studies analysed were based on quantitative employee surveys (Konovsky and Pugh, 1994; Podsakoff, et al. 1996; Macky and Boxall, 2007) or meta-analysis of surveys (Dirks and Ferrin, 2002). Others employed experimental design (Dirks, 1999), many of these involving students (Kim, et al. 2006; Ferrin and Dirks, 2003). Notably, however, studies drawing on qualitative data and adopting a constructivist epistemology were underrepresented while a small proportion of the papers were conceptual (Whitener, 1997; Whitener, et al., 1998; Brown, et al. 2005).

### **The dominance of functionalism**

Our review of the literature revealed that the majority of this work has strong functionalist meta-theoretical assumptions (Table 2). Creating and maintaining trust in most of these studies has a distinctly managerialist tone and agenda directed towards making organizations function more efficiently and improving overall performance. Notable examples of highly cited functionalist works include: Mayer, et al. (1995), Konovsky and Pugh (1994) Dirks and Ferrin (2001) Whitener, et al. (1998); Mayer and Davis, (1999); Dodgson, (1993); Mayer and Gavin, (2005) Sitkin and Roth (1993).

The managerial tone of these studies is possibly best illustrated in Coyle-Shapiro's (2002) paper, which focuses solely on implications for managers. This theme has become institutionalized in calls for authors in many management journals to demonstrate practical implications for managers, but rarely employees or their

representatives. Of the numerous studies focusing on the perceived impact of employee trust on organizational effectiveness and outcomes, most focused on increased customer satisfaction, and ways of managing employee motivation and commitment (e.g. Mayer, et al. 1995). Although a belief in these benefits of trust does not necessarily make researchers functionalist, much of this work assumes that trust is overwhelmingly good for organizational goals and that managers have the will, skill and opportunity to shape trust relations in the interests of all. Functionalism, however, was most evident in foundational studies of the trust repair literature, which rests on a mechanical metaphor of broken trust in need of repair (e.g. Tomlinson and Mayer, 2009; Gillespie and Dietz, 2009).

*Insert Table 2 about here*

### **Underrepresentation of interpretive and radical paradigms**

Our findings mirror Möllering's (2006) observation there is little interpretive research on intra-organizational trust (Table 3). Although there are some notable examples of research in this tradition in trust studies (which we cite below), our search returned only one study by Maguire and Phillips (2008) in which the authors investigated trust after a merger of two organizations. In this study, the authors saw an organization as narratively constituted and identified certain ambiguity in the perceptions of trust among employees from both organizations.

The under-representation of radical approaches in intra-organizational trust research has been noted before (Siebert, et al. 2015), so the low number of papers in the radical humanist and structuralist paradigms was not surprising. A weakness of Burrell and

Morgan's paradigms is the discrete, bipolar nature of their epistemological assumptions. This resulted in our having difficulty in classifying studies into humanist or structuralist categories (our attempts are reflected in Table 2) because many studies exhibited elements of both. For example, a study Rousseau and Tijoriwala (1999), which we classified as radical humanist, investigated empowerment among nurses and identified the potential for alternative interpretations of trust for example through the lens of employee sensemaking. The need for change promoted by management in their study is perceived by employees to be underpinned by economic, self-serving and political reasons.

We also found few radical structuralist studies. One exception was Knights and McCabe's (2003) qualitative study of a call centre in the UK, which focused on teamwork as a technology of control used to engender trust in management. Another was Grey and Garsten's (2001) discussion of intra-organizational trust in post-bureaucratic organizations. Drawing on two types of workers – employees of big consultancy firms and temporary agency workers, these latter authors discussed new post-bureaucratic modes of trust. Finally, Luthans and Sommer (1999) in their quasi-experimental study of a downsizing intervention in a healthcare organization found that managers and front-line employees would report different reactions to downsizing programs.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **What are the epistemological foundations of employee trust research?**

Firstly, our findings and analysis point to a preponderance of studies adopting a positivist epistemology, which attempts to describe and identify the antecedents and consequences of employee trust through empiricist methods (Blaikie, 2010). The

majority of this research is psychologically positivist in nature, by which we mean an attempt to make statements about employee trust that are objective, generalizable and value free in nature by drawing on the application of scientific methods. In this regard, our analysis resonates with trust researchers' self-perceptions discussed by Isaeva *et al.* (2015). Positivism in employee trust research involves adopting a hypo-deductive method, the operationalization of variables and the collection and manipulation of quantitative data to prove or disprove hypotheses through experimental design or large-scale surveys, often using students as human subjects. Unsurprisingly, such an epistemology and methodology continues to dominate psychology research but are increasingly under attack from post-positivists, and phenomenological and social constructivists (Breen and Darlestone-Jones, 2010; Tolman, 1992), who claim positivism's 'blind objectivism' (Crotty, 1998) is harmful to the advancement of the discipline. Thus, for example, Burrell and Morgan (1979: 218) claimed that much of the extant research in organizations was characterized by 'extreme and undue commitment to positivism and naïve empiricism'.

The great majority of the studies reviewed either developed variance theory explanations of trust, or were intended to test variance theory. This literature is characterized by rational choice theory (Möllering, 2006), and typically involves searching for antecedents and outcomes of trust, and explanations of causal relationships between dependent and independent variables, in which organizational actions taken by 'trustee' senior managers are claimed to lead to aggregate levels of 'trustor' perceptions. In contrast, we argue process-oriented studies (Langley et al, 2013) could provide a richer understanding of how trust is built, maintained and destroyed by

going beyond simple stage theories to capture the sometime messy dynamics and trajectories of employee trust.

Moreover, since the great majority of the 74 papers analysed above were written from a psychological or OB perspective, this trend further supports Godard's 'psychologisation thesis'. It also reflects Herman's (1995) observation that psychology has become a voice of cultural authority, which exemplifies American's "love affair" with the behavioural sciences. In contrast to the psychologically oriented studies, more sociologically informed research might raise questions about trust in the context of modern capitalism, such as why do employers need employees' trust, and levels of employee trust is necessary for organizations to function effectively? Perhaps rather than identifying the antecedents of trust and cause-and-effect relationships, questions should be asked about the origins and stability of divergent views on trust of a range of organizational stakeholders, and how these might be reconciled beyond the typical human resource management practices. Thus, our view is that the employee trust literature, while useful in some respects, needs to take a more sociological and, arguably, more critical turn to make it more relevant to HRM research and practice. Declining levels of trust in organizations cannot be explained by a deficit in people management practices as advocated by much of the current literature, as doing that raises unrealistic hopes for HRM managers. In sum, we agree with Godard's criticism, and we argue that greater methodological pluralism would allow, in our case, trust researchers to fully understand the antecedents and consequences of building, maintaining and repairing trust in organizations, and lead them to a richer understanding of how time and context might shed light on these processes in 'real world' situations rather than the 'bubble' inhabited by students.

### **What are the dominant paradigms?**

Echoing Isaeva et al's (2015) conclusions, we noted the dominance of positivist epistemology inherent in most studies analysed here. Given their positivistic nature, most of the studies could be located in the functionalist space. Functionalism in itself is a valid approach, especially in the normative HRM project. Many organizational theorists such as Czarniawska (2016) would like to see organizations function well. And the trust literature certainly provides copious evidence that high trust relations between the employer and employee help organizations function effectively (Williamson, 1993; Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Tyler, 2000; Mayer et al, 1995). Functionalist studies into trust also pave the way for normative theories of trust, and more normative theorizing has recently been advocated in management journals (Suddaby, 2014). However, social systems theories and 'objectivism' have been critiqued for being too deterministic, and too skewed towards a managerial view of organizations, which rest on an assumption that organizations are unitary enterprises and are often based on selective data from research that is unwilling to report unfavourable results (Rost & Ehmann, 2015). For example, the literature on trust we analysed often fails to acknowledge that trust is not always essential for organizations to function effectively, moreover, high levels of organizational trust may suffer, along with a number of other human resource shibboleths, from the 'too much of a good thing effect' (Langfred, 2004; Pierce and Aguinis, 2013). This effect refers to the seemingly beneficial HR and leadership variables, such as employee trust, reaching an inflection point, beyond which their relationship with desirable outcomes are no longer linear and positive. Thus, for example, increasing employee trust in organizations may result in diminishing marginal returns or even negative outcomes such as 'blind faith', whereby

the 'facts' and assumptions of organizational strategies are treated as uncontentious. As an article by Skinner et al (2014) suggests, trust in some workplace situations is inadvisable. Thus, we question the functionalist locus of much of current organizational trust research because of its tendencies to see high trust in organizations and managers as an essential stabilizing element. Excessive preoccupation with trust may be at the expense of other issues such as employee engagement, fairness, organizational justice, or employee loyalty.

The normative HRM literature sometimes fails to consider that there might be a conflict between employees and employers (e.g. Edwards, 1986). Our analysis of employee trust through the prism of paradigms indicates that although the functionalist approaches are dominant in trust research, other perspectives can provide an insightful analysis of trust that serves both theoretical and practical relevance in human resource management more generally. A conspicuous underrepresentation of interpretivist studies also points towards positivistic rather than social constructionist tendencies in trust literature. There are some examples of interpretivist studies that have not been captured in the top cited papers returned in our search (for example Lewicki, McAllister and Bies, 1998; Saunders and Thornhill, 2003; Six and Sorge, 2008; Williams, 2012; Timming, 2009). These studies acknowledge that trust relies on a dynamic interpretation of past events, and take into account employee sensemaking in the face of change. Interpretive studies on intra-organizational trust also shed light on the ambiguity of trust, how such ambiguity may affect employee relations, and may lead to a questioning of the intentions of management. Similarly, Lewicki, McAllister and Bies (1998) critique the normative view of trust research, citing its limited attention to the context, simplified dualism of trust and distrust, and tendency to treat relationships as



unidirectional constructs. In contrast to the normative view, these authors discuss the more multifaceted and ambivalent relationship realities that allow the parties to have different views of each other while acknowledging that not all parties have the same experiences of each other. Nevertheless, more recent literature on employee trust demonstrates that objectivism and other characteristics of functionalism still dominate the literature (e.g. Alfes, et al, 2012; Pate, et al. 2012)

In line with Godard's assessment, we also conclude that employee trust research often ignores 'messy issues', which are sometimes better explained by drawing on the ideas from economics, labour law, industrial relation studies, sociology or business studies. It is also largely dominated by the pure science paradigm – both ontologically and methodologically, which might be indicative of physics-envy in business schools (Khurana, 2007; Thomas and Wilson, 2011).

### **Epistemic reflexivity in employee trust research**

Psychology and OB have their place, so does functionalism, which we have been at pains to emphasize throughout this paper. Moreover, shifting the emphasis exclusively towards sociological, economic, legal approaches, by excluding psychological approaches may lead to playing down human agency. Thus, we are not necessarily suggesting that researchers should start working within different paradigms, which might be against their convictions as social scientists. Instead, we advocate greater epistemic reflexivity (Johnson and Duberley 2003), which can enhance trust research and, consequently, benefit practice. Arguably trust researchers should reflect on how their own meta-theoretical assumptions affect the research process. Such greater epistemic reflexivity may help researchers understand their own

epistemological approaches and may allow them to view trust from different angles, work with multiple realities, or to examine their own presuppositions. Morgan (1986) himself emphasized how the benefits of bringing multiple theories to the table provided a more complex and nuanced reading of social phenomena. The role of social scientists and managers, he argued, was to work with complex and sometimes contradictory readings and be able to weave them into a credible explanation. Thus, greater epistemic reflexivity among trust researchers may also open doors to a range of meta-theoretical approaches and provide HRM practitioners with more sophisticated forms of practical relevance that will serve them better in the future.

## **Limitations**

We acknowledge the limitations of our search strategy (discussed in the Methodology section above) and the shortcomings of the Burrell and Morgan's framework. With regard to our use of the Burrell and Morgan framework, we recognize that it has been critiqued in subsequent years (Burrell and Morgan are currently revising their original framework to address some of the criticisms). The reality of organizational life is more complex than their model tends to imply, which is why this 'boxology' was seen to force diverse and often nuanced strands of literature into simplistic classifications (Burrell, 1996; Knudsen, 2003). Morgan (1990) himself said that some researchers 'want to nitpick and argue about which side of the line this guy falls on as opposed to that guy, and how far from the edge would you put this one as opposed to that one'. The debates about paradigms' incommensurability, which followed the publication of sociological paradigms (Burrell 1996; Clegg, 1990; Clegg and Hardy, 1996; Czarniawska, 1998; Jackson and Carter 1993; Willmott, 1993), were indicative of the contested nature of the framework. The critics debated whether different paradigms are mutually exclusive and

precluding communication between researchers, or whether researchers can treat them as commensurable by taking a more pragmatic view, and borrow from all or some of these paradigms to suit their particular ends. We are aware that any simple classification of social science theories, given advancement in the philosophy of social sciences, is likely to be problematic, and this is certainly the case with Burrell and Morgan's framework.

### **Concluding remarks**

The debate on paradigms to this day continues to exert influence on contemporary management research (Deetz, 2009; Shepherd and Challenger, 2013; Hassard and Cox, 2013), hence we still believe that conducting the analysis using Burrell and Morgan's paradigms as a classificatory device has given us insights into the epistemological underpinnings of research into employee trust and its paradigmatic boundaries. This exercise highlighted key weaknesses of trust research, but also provided the basis for asking new and perhaps more searching questions, to be addressed by different methodologies and different 'ways of seeing'. These new questions may inform not only academic debates, but also suggest that greater reflexivity by HR practitioners can help them deal more effectively with trust problems in their organizations.

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**Table 1: Summary of Burrell and Morgan's sociological paradigms (Burrell and Morgan, 1979)**

Radical humanist	Radical structuralist
<p><b>The nature of science:</b>  <i>Ontology:</i> reality is socially constructed and different from natural world</p> <p><i>Epistemology:</i> no attempt to discover laws and underlying regularities, understanding of phenomena is related with participant's understanding and experience of it (i.e., it is not imposed on the participant by the researcher). Knowledge is subjective</p> <p><i>Human nature:</i> people capable of exercising free will</p> <p><i>Methodology:</i> focuses closely on people's subjectivity through inductive/qualitative approaches</p> <p><b>Nature of society:</b>  <i>Radical change:</i> critical perspective on organisations and the state. Social reality is characterised by potentiality, models of domination, emancipation, deprivation, structural conflict, contradiction</p>	<p><b>The nature of science:</b>  <i>Ontology:</i> reality is objective, concrete, external and similar to the natural world</p> <p><i>Epistemology:</i> searching for regularities and causal relationships between variables, drawing on hypothesis testing. Knowledge development is a cumulative process</p> <p><i>Human nature:</i> people's behaviour shaped by social structures and institutions</p> <p><i>Methodology:</i> focusing on systematic protocols and techniques such as surveys, questionnaires, personality tests, and standardised research instruments</p> <p><b>Nature of society:</b>  <i>Radical change:</i> critical perspective on organisations and the state. Social reality is characterised by potentiality, models of domination, emancipation, deprivation, structural conflict, contradiction</p>
Interpretive	Functionalist
<p><b>The nature of science:</b>  <i>Ontology:</i> reality is socially constructed and different from the natural world</p> <p><i>Epistemology:</i> no attempt to discover laws and underlying regularities, understanding of phenomena is related with participant's understanding and experience of it (i.e., it is not imposed on the participant by the researcher). Knowledge is subjective</p> <p><i>Human nature:</i> people capable of exercising free will</p> <p><i>Methodology:</i> focuses closely on people's subjectivity through inductive/qualitative approaches</p> <p><b>The nature of society:</b>  <i>Regulation:</i> functional co-ordination; improving social life within an existing framework (i.e. working within existing state of affairs); concern with social order.</p>	<p><b>The nature of science:</b>  <i>Ontology:</i> reality is objective, concrete, external and akin to the natural world</p> <p><i>Epistemology:</i> search for regularities and causal relationships between variables, drawing on hypothesis testing. Knowledge development is a cumulative process. Knowledge application is privileged for solving is sought for solving practical problems.</p> <p><i>Human nature:</i> people's behaviour shaped by social structures and institutions</p> <p><i>Methodology:</i> focus on systematic protocol and techniques such as surveys, questionnaires, personality tests, and standardised research instruments.</p> <p><b>The nature of society:</b>  <i>Regulation:</i> functional co-ordination; improving social life within an existing framework (i.e. working within existing state of affairs); concern with social order.</p>

**Table 2: Sociological paradigms and employee trust**

<b>Radical humanist</b>	<b>Radical structuralist</b>
1. Rousseau and Tijoriwala (1999)	1. Ghoshal, Bartlett and Morgan (1999) 2. Grey and Garsten (2001) 3. Knights and McCabe (2003) 4. Luthans and Sommer (1999)
<b>Interpretivist</b>	<b>Functionalist</b>
1. Maguire and Phillips (2008)	1. Ang and Slaughter (2001) 2. Aryee, Budhwar and Chen (2002) 3. Babin, Boles and Robin (2000) 4. Bal, De Lange, Jansen and Van Der Velde (2008) 5. Barnett and Kellerman (2006) 6. Brockner, Siegel, Daly, Tyler and Martin (1997) 7. Brown, Trevino, and Harrison (2005) 8. Buckley, Clegg and Tan (2006) 9. Chattopadhyay and George (2001) 10. Child and Mollering (2003) 11. Coyle-Shapiro (2002) 12. Cropanzano, Bowen and Gilliland (2007) 13. Davis, Schoorman, Mayer and Tan (2000) 14. Deery, Iverson and Walsh (2006) 15. Dietz and Den Hartog (2006) 16. Dirks and Ferrin (2001) 17. Dirks and Ferrin (2002) 18. Dirks (1999) 19. Dodgson (1993) 20. Edwards and Cable (2009) 21. Ferrin, Blight and Kohles (2007) 22. Ferrin and Dirks (2003) 23. Ferrin et al 2006 24. George (2003) 25. Gibbs, Merchant, Van der Stede and Vargus (2004) 26. Gilbert and Tang (1998) 27. Gillespie and Dietz, (2009) 28. Gopinath and Becker (2000) 29. Gould-Williams and Davies (2005) 30. Gould-Williams (2003) 31. Hom, Tsui, Wu, Le, Zhang, Fu and Li (2009) 32. Huang, Iun, Liu and Gong (2010) 33. Johnson and O-Leary-Kelly (2003) 34. Kiffin-Petersen and Cordery (2003) 35. Kim, Dirks, Cooper and Ferrin, (2006) 36. Konovsky and Pugh (1994) 37. Korsgaard, Brodt and Whitener (2002) 38. Laschinger and Finegan (2005) 39. Laschinger (2004) 40. Lee, Pillutia and Law (2000) 41. Lewicki, Tomlinson and Gillespie (2006) 42. Macky and Boxall (2007) 43. Mayer and Davis (1999) 44. Mayer and Gavin (2005) 45. Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995) 46. Mollering (2001) 47. Nyhan (2000)

	48. Pearce, Branicyzki and Bigley (2000) 49. Podsakoff, MacKenzie and Bommer, (1996) 50. Ramaswami (1996) 51. Restubog, Hornsey, Bordia and Esposito (2008) 52. Robinson and Morrison (1995) 53. Schoorman, Mayer and Davis (2007) 54. Simons, Friedman, Liu and Parks (2007) 55. Sitkin and Roth (1993) 56. Spreitzer and Mishra (1999) 57. Spreitzer and Mishra (2002) 58. Stanley, Meyer and Topolnytsky (2005) 59. Stinglhamber, De Cremer and Mercken (2006) 60. Tomlinson and Mayer (2009) 61. Treadway, Hochwater, Ferris, Kacmar, Ammeter and Buckley (2004) 62. Wat and Schafer (2005) 63. Watson-Manheim and Belanger (2007) 64. Whitener (1997) 65. Whitener (2001) 66. Whitener, Brodt, Korsgaard and Werner (1998) 67. Yoon and Suh (2003) 68. Zacharatos, Barling and Iverson (2005)
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